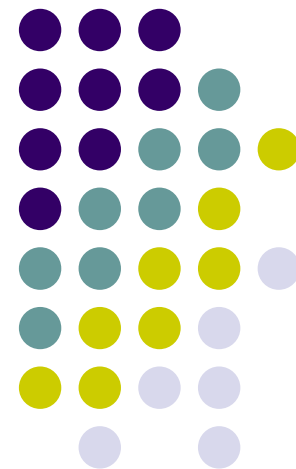


Strategies to Working With Schools



Module 6 Creating Healthy School Environments EPA Region 5



Working with Schools

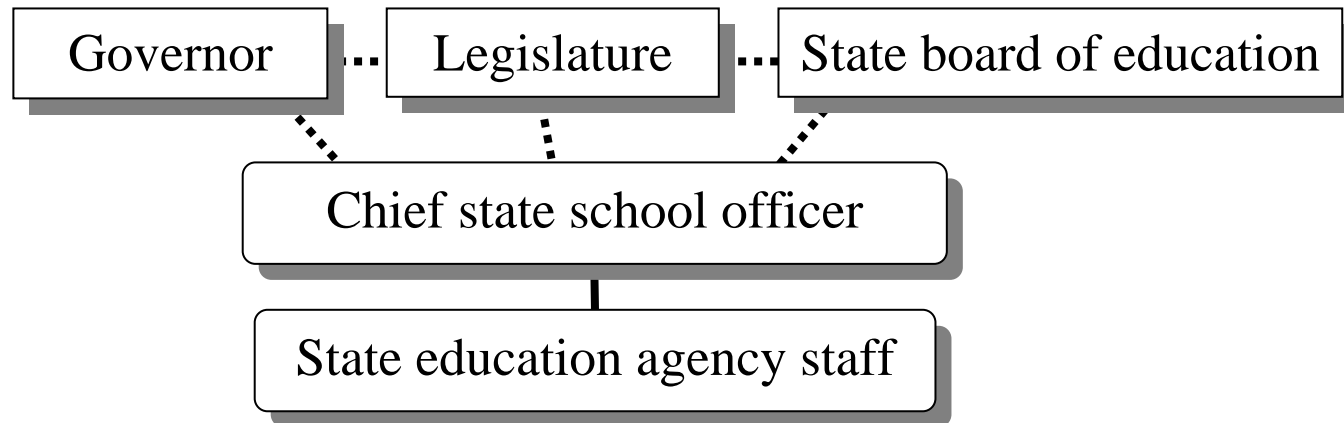


- Who's Who
- Approaches
- Understanding What Schools are up against
- Creating a Win-Win Situation





Who's Who at the State Level



- Become knowledgeable about who has what authority and how they interact

Please Note: Parts of this presentation have been adapted from National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) publication: **How Schools Work and How to Work with Schools** Available on their website: <http://www.nasbe.org/>

Highly Decentralized Decision Making



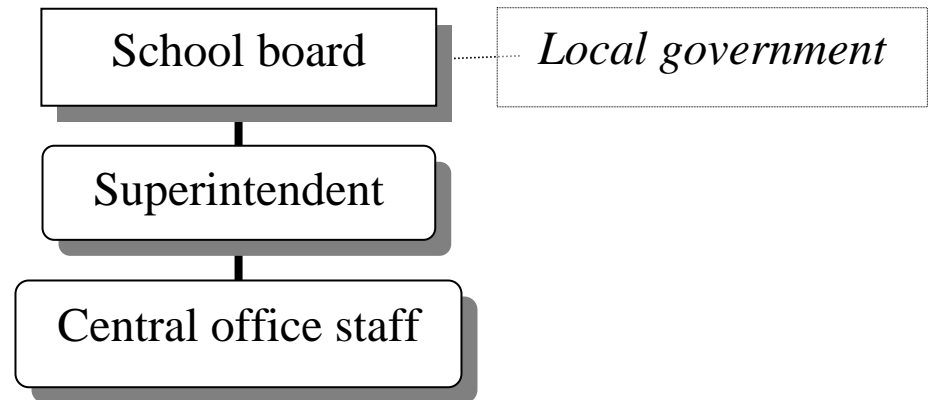
- Tradition of “local control”
—limited federal and state roles
- Individual superintendents and principals have broad authority
- Change must often occur district by district and school by school

Who's Who at the School District Level



In theory....

- The school board makes policy
- The superintendent implements it

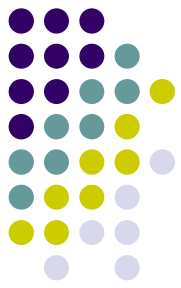


Communicating with School District Leaders

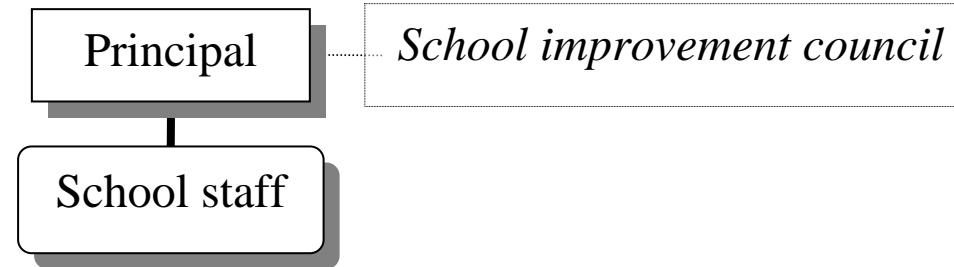


- Written communications
- Direct contact with school officials
- Make presentations at meetings and conferences
 - Trade associations
 - School Business Associations
- Raise awareness of the subject
- Identify the right group to approach

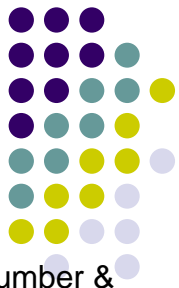
Who's Who at the School Level



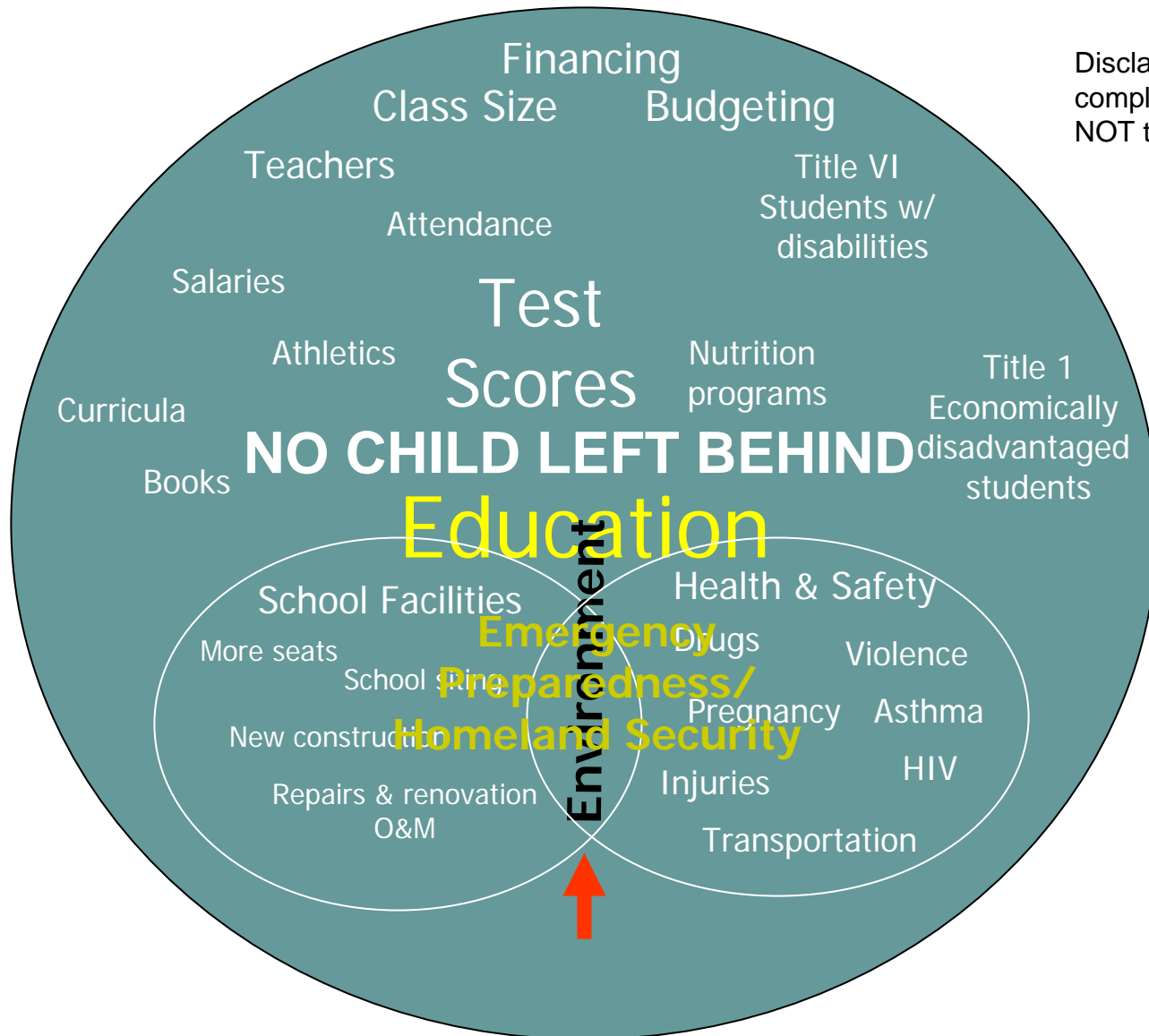
- **The principal is key**
- Potential entry points
 - Facilities Managers
 - Classroom teachers
 - Parent organizations
 - Student organizations
 - Custodians
 - School Nurses
 - School improvement team
 - Environmental Health Services
 - Partnering Organizations
 - Unions



How Schools View Environmental Issues

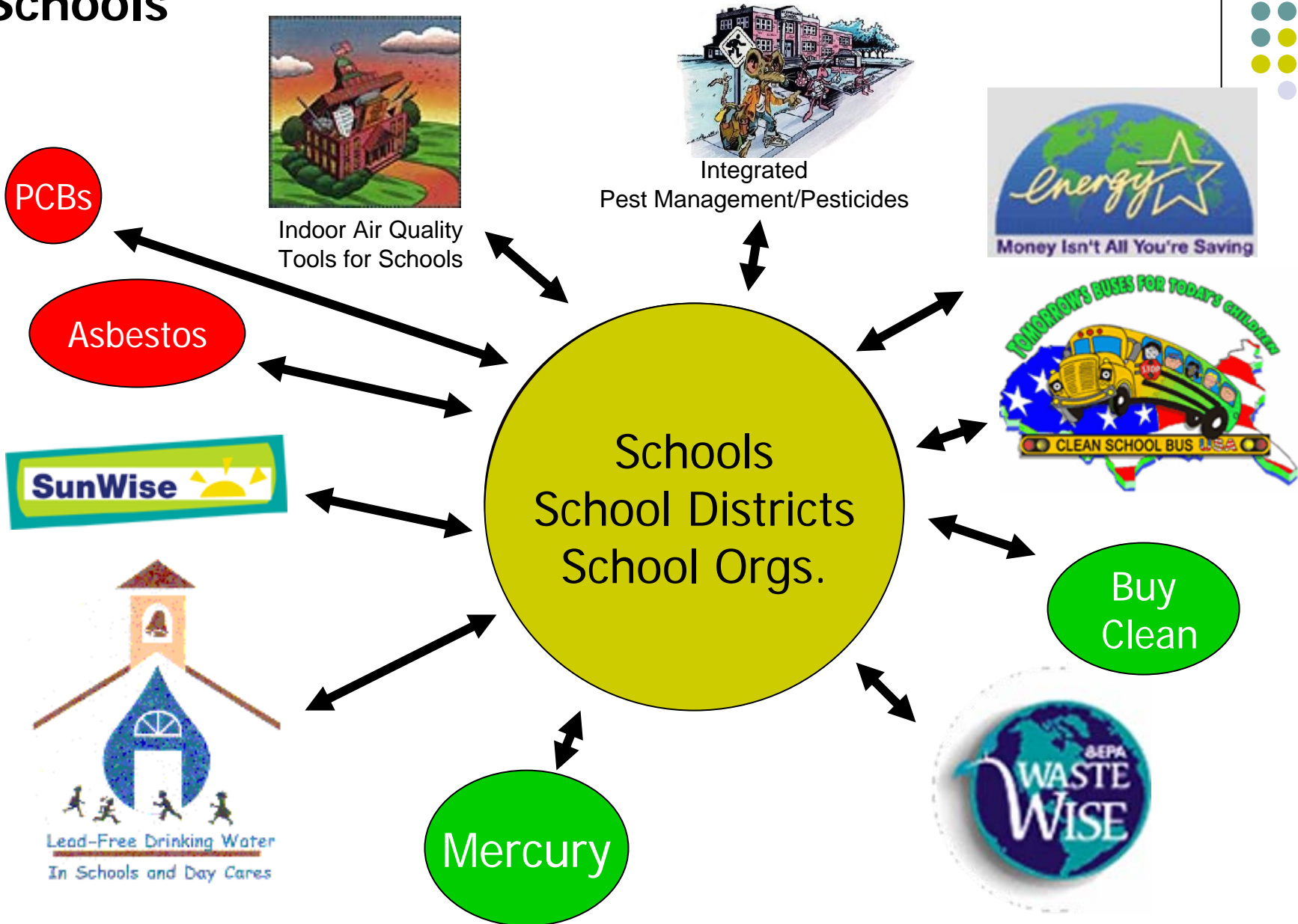


Disclaimer: Number & complexity of issues NOT to scale

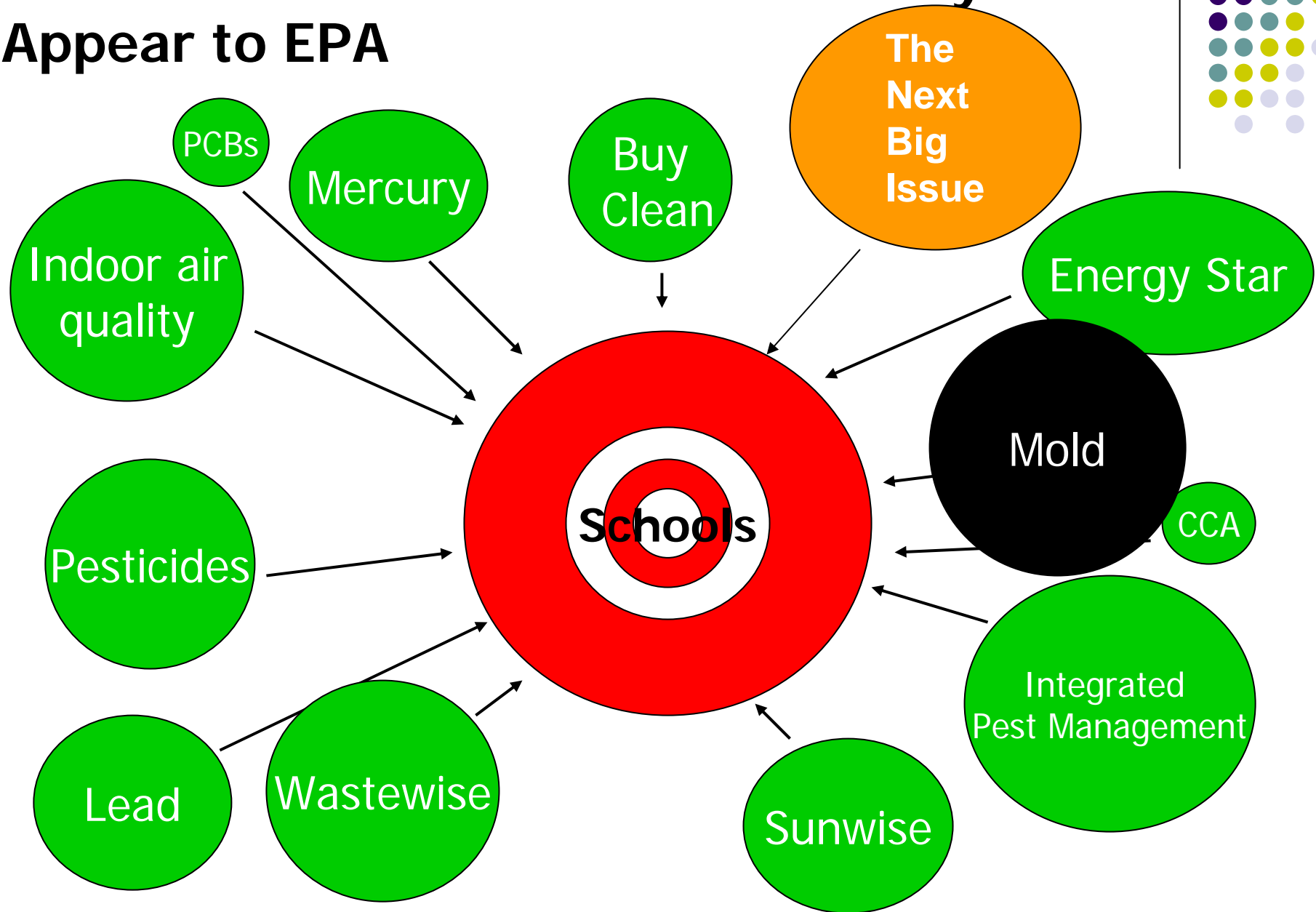




How EPA Programs View Relationships with Schools



How Schools Sometimes Think They Appear to EPA





Schools Agenda

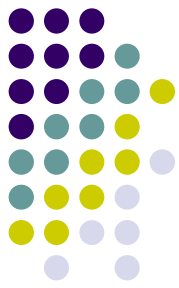
- Competing Demands
 - Budget cuts
 - Layoff
- Reforms focused on Standardized tests
- Absenteeism, drop-out



EPA Goal

EPA/Federal Programs that:

- Put environmental issues into context with other schools issues
- Provide tools: guidance, training, technical support
- Are fully coordinated and integrated
- Support schools in their primary mission of educating children



Improve Coordination & Collaboration



- Across EPA
 - EPA Schools Workgroup
 - 150+ EPA staff from all EPA regions and HQ programs
 - Healthy School Environments Web Portal
 - Improve EPA Regional coordination

Persuading Education Leaders



- Note serious problems/needs, but emphasize solutions
- Be honest about costs and potential implementation problems
- Link to existing policies, programs, and goals
- Be aware of current terminology ('education reform', 'ready to learn', 'academic achievement')
- Highlight school health as an emerging trend

Moving the Issue Forward



- Enlist community support
- Keep lines of communication open-build trust
- Use environmental health as a 'weapon' to further their agenda
- Work with partnering organizations
- Brief policymakers on answers to difficult questions
- Suggest a pilot study if a policy or program does not gain support



Creating a Win-Win Situation

- Productive Environment
- Remove barriers to learning
 - Psychological
 - Physical
- Reduce employee/student absenteeism
- Benefits of taking a proactive approach
- Avoid shut downs, bad press, cost of repairs, litigation

*Show your program
can meet their goals*



Proven Track Record

- **San Francisco Unified School District**
 - Visits to the office for the use of asthma inhalers were reduced by half
 - Airflow throughout the schools has been greatly improved
- **Portsmouth School Department**
 - Dramatic decrease in absenteeism and increase in comfort
 - Visits to the nurse's office with complaints of stomachaches and headaches decreased by 25 percent in the first five months
- **Seattle School District**
 - In “Rehab the Lab” program, 81 sites had either bulk mercury liquid, mercury thermometers, or more both.
 - Total cost for packaging, transport and disposal of the mercury for all 81 sites was \$24,300.

Persistence Pays



- Respect the hierarchy
- Stay focused on the ultimate goal
- Don't expect quick or easy success
- Sustain the effort
- Be willing to compromise...but know your bottom line
- Don't burn your bridges

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Meade